



# INNER RESOURCES FOR STRESS PARTICIPANT GUIDE

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## Session 1. Welcome to Inner Resources for Stress

You are about to embark on a wonderful journey! Inner Resources for Stress (IR) is a program of mindfulness and meditation (MM) that you can use to:

- Reduce stress
- Remain calmer even when things aren't going well
- Let go of upsetting thoughts and feelings as they come up, rather than dwelling on them
- Pay attention to thoughts, feels, and experiences in the present moment
- Pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them

IR is a mindfulness, meditation, and mantra program. By participating in this program, you can easily begin a regular daily meditation practice that will renew and nourish you.

### How Does Meditation Help?

How can meditation help renew and nourish you? The idea is simple. Most of us have habitual patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving that are deeply ingrained. They are so ingrained, in fact, that they have become our reality. Meditation gives us a chance to step back from our usual patterns and make other choices for ourselves.

MM practice help to develop resilience to stress and trauma by developing natural capacities for regulating attention, positive and negative emotions, and thoughts. MM practices can be used in daily life to help with stressors as they come up. In addition, the MM practices in IR are designed to be used to help identify and resolve responses to stress and trauma. Resource Pages 1–3 at the end of this IR Participant Guide give details about how and why to use MM for stress and trauma.

### What Is Involved in IR?

IR is a secular program. It is designed to be used by people in all walks of life, from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, who want an introduction to a classical form of meditation. MM are basic human abilities, just like paying attention or falling asleep are natural abilities. This program is intended to help you develop your natural ability for MM.

IR usually includes weekly group meetings led by an experienced meditation therapist and between-session practice of the meditation techniques, though you can use this guide even without an ongoing class.

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## Session 1 (continued)

### *Aims of Weekly Group Meetings*

- Learn and practice mindfulness, meditation, and mantra techniques
- Talk about how to use these techniques in everyday life
- Talk about ways to apply the meditation practice to problems with stress and trauma
- Discuss ways to set up a daily practice of meditation, both at home and in daily life

### **Taking the Practice with You**

Many people go to meditation or relaxation sessions and wish they could take home some of the good feeling they get. So often, that centered, relaxed feeling is gone by the time they drive off into traffic or get back to their busy routines.

This IR Participant Guide contains the information and materials you need to bring mindfulness with you wherever you go by starting a regular daily MM practice. A session-by-session description of the program is given in Resource Page 4 in this Appendix.

### **Using the IR Participant Guide**

Each section of this IR Participant Guide includes:

- An essay about the theme for the session
- Frequently asked questions (FAQs) about that session's practice
- Suggestions for your between-session practice for that week
- A journal page where you can reflect and record your journey to renewal
- Practice tracks (audio recordings) to help with your practice (available on the companion website; see the box at the end of the table of contents)

Getting started with your MM practice is easy! Here's all you do:

- Pick a time and place to practice.
- Read the essay, FAQs, and the suggestions for your weekly practice.
- Listen to the practice audio track and do the other practices assigned for that week.
- Record your practice time on the Daily Practice Log (available on page 245).
- You can record your experiences and goals on the journal page included for each week. You may wish to do this once a week or more often.

(continued)

## Session 1 (continued)

### Why Practice MM?

Any new skill requires practice. If you wanted to learn to play basketball, you'd spend a lot of time dribbling the ball, playing one-on-one, and shooting free throws. The more you practiced those skills, the better you'd play during games. Likewise, the more you practice meditation, the easier it gets and the more skillful you become. You can use the skills you learn in meditation to deal with stress in your everyday life. As you master the meditation skills in this program, you will find that the difficulties and stresses of everyday life become great opportunities to practice meditation in action. By using meditation in everyday life, you can master situations that previously seemed difficult. It's a bit like learning to surf. As you become good at it, those big waves don't grind you into the sand so often but become exciting opportunities to soar higher than you ever have.

### Types of Practice in IR

There are two main types of practice in IR: Sitting Practice and Practice in Daily Life. This program gives you the information and materials you need to get started on both these types of practice right away.

#### ***Sitting Practice***

Sitting Practice is something you set aside time to do. You are doing Sitting Practice when you are meditating and not doing other things at the same time. The recommended practice time is 30 minutes per day. There are many different types of sitting practice. The main types of sitting practice in IR are included in practice audio tracks. The four primary practice audio tracks are each about 30 minutes long. In addition, there are Bonus Audio Tracks, ranging from 1.5 to 15 minutes in length, that you can use to try out the practices for a shorter length of time.

#### ***Types of Sitting Practice***

- Breath-focused attention (included as part of all forms of practice)
- Body–Breath Awareness
- Guided Body Tour
- Complete Breath
- Hum Sah
- Tension Release

(continued)

## ***Practice in Daily Life***

Practice in Daily Life is practice that you do at any time during your regular daily activities. One of the greatest benefits of developing a sitting meditation practice is that you will learn skills that you can bring into your life, to renew and nourish you wherever you are.

### ***Some Types of Practice in Daily Life***

- Breath Awareness
- Body–Breath Awareness
- Repeating Hum Sah
- Letting Go

## **How to Start Meditating Every Day**

Humans are creatures of habit, so when you have a daily routine, it will become easier to practice every day.

### ***What Types of Practice Are There?***

- **Practice in Daily Life:** You can practice during all your daily activities by noticing your breathing
- **Sitting Practice:** You are engaging in sitting practice when you are doing your practice and not doing other things at the same time
- **Watching your breathing** as you inhale and exhale is an effective sitting practice

### ***Choose a Time to Practice***

- Pick a regular time to practice every day
- Many people like to practice either first thing in the morning or last thing at night
- You can try different times to see what works for you

### ***Choose a Place to Practice***

- Choose a comfortable spot where you can sit up and be alert
- You may want to place pleasant objects, such as a flower, rock, or candle, near you
- Best not to place anything in your meditation area that has strong emotions or memories associated with it, such as a photo—that might be distracting

### ***How to Sit for Meditation***

- Choose a firm chair with good back support

(continued)

## Session 1 (continued)

- Place both feet flat on the floor
- Sit with a relatively straight spine, with your shoulders directly over your hips
- You can place your hands on your thighs or simply fold your hands in your lap
- Your head should be centered over your shoulders: Try tipping your head forward and backward and from side to side until you find that centered spot
- You should be as comfortable as possible so that your body does not distract you too much

### *What Should I Do If I Don't Have Time to Meditate?*

- The more practice a person does, the more benefits they receive
- Start with 5–10 minutes and build up to a daily practice of 20–30 minutes
- Use practice in daily life to keep the practice going throughout the day
- Even a few minutes count

## FAQs for Session 1

*Do I have to read all the materials in the IR Participant Guide and write in the journal pages?*

“No.” The reading and writing exercises in this guide are optional, but highly recommended. The information in this IR Participant Guide will be covered in your group sessions, and you may find it helpful to read the essays and FAQs so that you can review what was covered. The journal pages are designed to help you reflect on how the practice is going for you so that you can discuss it in the group each session.

*How do I use the Daily Practice Log?*

The Daily Practice Log is for recording how many minutes you spent each day doing each of the practices. You will not need to record the time that you were in the group meetings.

The Practice Log is divided into rows and columns. The rows correspond to the days of the week. For each day of the week, write down how many minutes you did each of the types of practice listed in the columns (such as listening to practice audio tracks, sitting meditation, and so forth).

You will not usually have something to record in each column every day. For example, during Session 1, you may have only used Track 1 of the practice audio tracks and not done any practice without the audio tracks. In that case, just write down how many minutes you listened to Track 1 that day. In the Comments section at the bottom of the page, you might want to note how your practice went. There is an example Daily Practice Log at the end of this section.

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## Session 1 (continued)

*If I don't remember how much practice I did, can I estimate?*

Certainly! In our experience, these estimates are accurate. The information in the column marked "Practice in Daily Life" is usually difficult to record: How long does it take to breathe consciously in the supermarket line anyway? Give it your best guess! The important thing is to remember to bring your practice into your everyday life.

*Should I feel bad if I don't have something to record on the Daily Practice Log every day?*

By all means no; don't feel bad! The Daily Practice Log is a great chance to practice simply observing yourself without judging. It isn't homework you do for a grade, but a chance to see how you are progressing. In the first weeks of the program, you may experiment with different times and places to practice. The comments you write on each log will help you remember what your experience was like.

*What if I need to miss a session?*

Even if you miss a session, you can still follow along with the group by reading the essay and the FAQs for that session. Then look at the practice suggestions for that week. You can use the practice audio track for that week to guide your practice. Go ahead and record your minutes of practice each day on the Daily Practice Log. You can record your experiences on the journal pages.

Attendance at the sessions is important. In our experience, those who attend more sessions get more from the program. If you do need to miss a session, please call and let your facilitator know.

## Session 1 Practice

### ***Tasks for the Next Week***

This week, you can begin your daily practice by trying different times and places to practice. See whether practice in the morning, evening, or some other time of day is best. It is helpful to set up a regular place to practice, so arrange a space that is conducive to practice. A meditation space does not have to be large. It can be a small place where you will not be distracted by work or other factors. Choose a posture that will be conducive to meditation, such as sitting relatively straight in a chair. Any place or posture, such as lying down, which is associated with sleeping will probably not be helpful as you may spend your time sleeping or resting rather than meditating.

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### ***Practice in Daily Life***

Take one conscious breath at any time during the week and notice what happens. A conscious breath is one that you are fully aware of. You can report the results in the group next week. This is a relatively easy practice that you can do anywhere or at any time. Record the experience in your Session 1 Journal.

### ***Sitting Practice***

Find a comfortable spot with access to a way to play the practice audio tracks. Try to sit with your back relatively straight so you can breathe easily. If you get sleepy, you can raise your chin a little bit. Your body may relax, but keep your mind awake for the best results.

Listen to Track 1, “Guided Body Tour,” at least 6 days this week. You can get started by trying one of the Bonus Audio Tracks, which offer briefer versions of the practices. You can also try any of the 30-minute practice tracks, though it is helpful to follow along with the sequence of tracks, as the skills build on each other. The emphasis should be finding a practice that fits you, not making yourself fit the practice.

### ***Daily Practice Log***

Write down the number of minutes you have spent each day on each practice. You will probably not do all the listed practices every week. You can just list the times for the practices you’ve used. It is important to record time spent doing practice in daily life, even if it is only a few minutes. Any amount of practice is helpful. Most people begin with shorter practice periods and work up to longer practice periods over time. You could bring your Daily Practices Log to the sessions for the therapist to review.



## ● Inner Resources for Stress Daily Practice Log (Example) ●

Name: Ja'Nia Session: 1 Starting date: 2/21/22

Record the number of minutes each day of each activity.

Number of minutes using each technique →	Track 1: Guided Body Tour (with audio)	Track 2: Complete Breath (with audio)	Track 3: Hum Sah (with audio)	Track 4: Tension Release (with audio)	Bonus Tracks (with audio)	Sitting Meditation/ Breathing Practice (without audio)	Practice in Daily Life (Breath Awareness, Hum Sah, Letting Go)	Daily Total (minutes per day)
Monday 2/21/22	Attended group							
Tuesday 2/22/22	30							30
Wednesday 2/23/22	30						5	35
Thursday 2/24/22	22						15	37
Friday 2/25/22	30						10	40
Saturday 2/26/22	30						5	35
Sunday 2/27/22	30							30

**Comments:** I was able to watch my breathing while stuck in traffic Friday. It really helped. Next time, I think I will practice before I drive in the morning to reduce my stress.

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## ● Session 1 Journal ●

List three goals for participating in **Inner Resources for Stress**. Be sure that the goals are reasonable and that you will have some way to tell when you have accomplished them. For example, someone's goal might be "I want to stay calmer when driving my car."

Goal 1: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Goal 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Goal 3: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

List any obstacles that you may have to overcome to accomplish your goals. For example, if your goal is "develop a daily practice of meditation," then an obstacle might be "having enough time." Finally, list possible solutions to each obstacle, such as "Wake up half an hour earlier to practice."

Obstacles to Goal 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Solutions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Obstacles to Goal 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Solutions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Obstacles to Goal 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Solutions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Debriefing the Practice:** How did the practice go this week? What parts of it were easy? What parts were more difficult? What did you feel when you were practicing, that is, how did your mind, body, and emotions feel? Did you remember to take a conscious breath this week? If so, what happened?

\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

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## Session 2. Finding a Seat

This is the week to make sure you have a regular time and place for Sitting Practice. Humans are creatures of habit, so when you establish a daily routine, it becomes easier to practice each time. You may want to experiment with different times of day and spaces to find what works for you. It may be helpful to record what you've tried in your journal so that you can reflect on what has worked best for you over time.

### Times to Practice

Many people like to practice either first thing in the morning or last thing at night before they go to bed. Both times have their benefits. When you practice first thing in the morning, you get the benefit of preparing for your day. You may find it is easier to bring your practice into your life if you have started the morning that way. For those who have stressful jobs and lives, practicing in the morning is essential. By starting out the day in a peaceful and centered way, it is possible to use the practice to rise above the stresses and tensions in our lives. If mornings are already a busy time, you may need to start your day a half-hour earlier. You might have to go to bed a bit earlier so you are well rested for practice.

Practicing in the evening also has great benefits. It is much like erasing the board after a long class. Evening practice offers a chance to release all the tensions of the day and go to sleep with a peaceful mind and heart. Many people find that they sleep much better if they practice in the evening, because the practice helps quiet down all the thoughts, plans, tensions, and emotions that have accumulated throughout the day. You can also try to bring your practice right into your sleep by using the techniques to stay in touch with that peaceful place you found in meditation.

### Place to Practice

A small corner is adequate for practice. Many people like to place objects that they have positive associations with in their practice space, such as a flower, rock, or candle in addition to the listening device for the practice audio tracks. You will get the best results if you do not place anything in your meditation area that has strong emotions or memories associated with it, such as a photo. You might find that distracting during the practice.

It is important that you create a practice place that is not associated with sleep, so you won't fall asleep or rest when you are trying to practice. The recliner where you like to nap in the afternoon would not be a good choice. Likewise, meditating while lying down or even sitting on the bed may make you too drowsy to get the full benefit of your Sitting Meditation practice.

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## **Mindfulness and Sleep**

If you have trouble sleeping, you can use the practice audio tracks or any of the meditation techniques to help you sleep. First, make sure you have a time to practice during the day when you will not fall asleep. These practices really work best when you have had a chance to practice them while you are awake. If you only practice in order to fall asleep, soon you will train yourself to fall asleep every time you try to meditate.

Once you have established a daytime practice, you can use the practice audio tracks or any of the meditation techniques when you are lying in bed to go to sleep. For example, you can practice mindful breathing by watching your breath as you inhale and exhale. You can use the Letting Go practice to let go of all the tensions, thoughts, plans, and feelings that have come up during your day. You may wish to watch yourself fall asleep by noticing as different parts of your body and mind relax. If you awaken during the night, you can watch your breathing and let go of all remaining tensions. Then enjoy a peaceful night's sleep.

### **Falling Asleep during Meditation**

It is not uncommon to feel sleepy during meditation. A quick solution is to raise your chin a bit and take a full refreshing breath. Opening your eyes to practice can also be helpful.

There are a number of reasons why people fall asleep during meditation. If your mind becomes quieter during meditation, it may seem like what happens right before you fall asleep, and it may be easy to drift off to sleep. In addition, people can fall asleep when they don't intend to because they are not getting enough sleep, have poor sleep quality, or have other medical issues. Becoming drowsy during the day and falling asleep unexpectedly can be signs of a sleep problem, so it is recommended that you go see your doctor to rule out a sleep disorder or other medical problem if this is happening.

### **How to Sit for Meditation**

Choose a firm chair with good back support. Place both your feet flat on the floor and adjust your posture as described above for sitting cross-legged. If your lower back bothers you in this position, fold up a blanket or place some other support under your feet. You may even be more comfortable if your heels are a little lower than your toes on the blanket. You will get the best results if you sit with a relatively straight spine, with your shoulders directly over your hips. If you are not sure if your back is straight enough, try rolling your shoulders forward as though you are reading something on a low table. Observe how this posture changes your breathing. Then slowly straighten up until your breathing flows more deeply and effortlessly. You can place your hands on your thighs or simply fold your hands in your lap. Your head should be centered over your shoulders. Try tipping your head forward and backward and from side to side

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## Session 2 (continued)

until you find that centered spot. You should be as comfortable as possible so you can sustain your practice.

You might also like to try sitting in an easy cross-legged position on the floor on a meditation cushion or folded up blanket. Your feet and ankles can rest on the floor or a rug. You might try folding the blanket to different heights to find the most comfortable thickness for you to sit on. Be sure that the cushion is tall enough so you are not hunched over. If your knees are higher than your hips, you may wish to raise the height of your seat. If one leg is uncomfortable, you may place a cushion or rolled up blanket under it to support your thigh. It's important to choose a posture that is comfortable to maintain over the period of meditation practice. The best posture is the one that fits your body.

### Using the Practice Audio Tracks

For the first few weeks of this program, you will use the practice tracks, which are audio recordings to help guide your meditation (available at <http://www.guilford.com/waelde-materials>). The guided practice on the practice tracks is just like the kind of guided practice you would get in a meditation class of this type. Some people like to use headphones, especially if they want privacy. Others like to play the tracks aloud and practice with their families. You might want to experiment with different ways of playing the tracks to see what works best for you.

### FAQs for Session 2

*What should I do if I don't have time to meditate?*

No one seems to have enough spare time. This guide contains many helpful suggestions for carving out a short period every day for yourself. A meditation teacher once responded to this issue by asking: Do you have time to wash and eat every day? If so, then you should also have time to practice. Make it a part of your daily routine, like brushing your teeth. This program involves only a short (30-minute) practice time every day. The practice audio tracks make the guided practice easy. We also know from experience that the more practice a person does, the more benefits they receive. Most people don't start with lots of practice, but build up the amount over time. Slow and steady changes are usually the most lasting. Do as much as you can each day.

*What should I do if I'm not at home or do not have privacy at home?*

This IR Participant Guide can be used wherever you go. It may be helpful for you to have access to the practice audio tracks and the IR Participant Guide if you will be traveling or want privacy when others are around. You can use earbuds to listen to the practice tracks. You can bring your practice with you wherever you go: whether it is to a beach or to a hospital bedside.

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## Session 2 (continued)

*Can I practice while driving my car?*

Of course, you can practice if you keep your eyes open and stay alert. People often think of meditation and sitting quietly with eyes closed, with less awareness of one's surroundings. In IR, the emphasis is on bringing the practice into your everyday life. There are many practices that you can use, in your day-to-day life, with your eyes open. Meditation practice should help you become more aware of, not less aware of, the present moment.

*Can I practice while listening to music or in a noisy place?*

Sometimes people want to listen to music in order to create a feeling of relaxation or to distract from the process of mindful attention. Those are good reasons to listen to music, but they are not the same as meditating. Likewise, there are concerns that it is impossible to meditate in a noisy place. Mindfulness includes paying attention to the present moment and nonjudgmentally noting your reactions, so simply notice the noise and reaction and you will be meditating.

*Can I use a different practice audio track than the one assigned for that week?*

Yes. Many techniques are offered in this program, and we expect that different people will gravitate to different practices based on their experience and inclinations.

Try the audio practices and see how they work.

*What about not using the practice audio track at all?*

Over the course of the program, we will move from using the practice audio tracks on a daily basis to practice without the audio recordings, as you begin to use your meditation skills.

*What about just using the bonus audio tracks?*

Bonus audio tracks are great for quick practice periods and for getting acquainted with the practices, but if you want all the content, and enough practice time to learn the skills, try the regular practices as assigned.

## Session 2 Practice

### ***Tasks for the Next Week***

This is a week for you to make sure you have a space where you can practice quietly for 30 minutes a day. If there's enough room, place objects there that will be pleasing but not emotionally evocative or distracting. Even a small space is useful, as long as the space is free of distractions and conducive to staying awake. For example, a desk or table that contains unfinished work or bills might be distracting. Lying down may be conducive to going to sleep, rather than staying

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## Session 2 (continued)

engaged in the practice. Try to find a time and place to practice that are feasible and sustainable. You can try out different settings and see how each works.

### ***Practice in Daily Life***

Watch your breathing throughout the day. Take one conscious breath during a stressful moment and notice what happens. Also try watching your breathing throughout the day. Breath-focused attention is helpful when you are going to sleep or relaxing.

### ***Sitting Practice***

Make sure your meditation space is clean and orderly and that you can practice quietly there for 30 minutes. Place objects that will be pleasing to you but do not have emotional associations. Make sure there is room for your audio player. Try to sit with your back relatively straight so you can breathe easily. If you get sleepy, you can raise your chin a little bit. Your body may relax, but keep your mind awake for the best results.

Use both Track 1, “Guided Body Tour,” and Track 2, “Complete Breath,” at least 6 days this week. You can listen to “Guided Body Tour” on one day and then “Complete Breath” on the next.

### ***Daily Practice Log***

Write down the number of minutes you have spent each day on each practice. You may not do all the listed practices every week. You can record comments about your experiences of the practices and/or reflections on your daily life and how they affect your practice. You might also reflect on how your practice has changed your responses to stressful or challenging life situations.

● Session 2 Journal ●

What times of the day did you try to meditate this week? Which times worked best? Which times of day did not seem to work?

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Where did you meditate this week? What else would you like to do to arrange a space to meditate? Were there any distractions in your environment, and how did you deal with them?

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Is there anything interfering with practicing on a daily basis? Think about what may have kept you from doing as much as you wanted and consider ways you might deal with these obstacles.

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**Debriefing the Practice:** How did the practice go this week? What parts of it were easy or difficult? What did you feel when you were practicing, that is, how did your mind, body, and emotions feel? Did you remember to watch your breathing this week, especially during stressful moments? Did it change the way you felt, and acted, or the ways others reacted to you?

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## Session 3. The Power of Letting Go

When we hear the words *letting go*, we think of losing something. Letting go usually means a person has given up and now someone else is taking control. In this practice, letting go does mean giving up, but it is a way of giving up your tensions so that *you* can be in control of your own reactions again.

### How Do Tensions Develop?

Feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that we repeat again and again become deeply ingrained patterns. The more we repeat these patterns, the more it seems that we can't get away from them. Our patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting start to define who we are and how we see the world. Our tensions are like ruts in a road. Once we have driven over the same ground again and again, we have formed deep ruts. Then it's hard to drive any place else on the road because we are stuck in the ruts. The Letting Go practice helps us to release our habitual patterns so we are free to choose other ways to think, feel, and act. It is like filling in the ruts in the road so we are free to drive in new places. The more you meditate and practice Letting Go, the more you fill in these ruts in the road. You gradually become freer to choose new ways of feeling, thinking, and acting. Old patterns don't always go away in one day, but with practice we can let go of them.

### How to Do the "Letting Go" Practice

What do we give up when we let go? Only the tensions we are holding inside. Here's how you can do the Letting Go practice: Watch your breathing. If you experience any tension, take a breath. You can picture your breath going right to the tension or feeling inside and blowing up a balloon that is bigger than the tension. The flow of your breath breaks up the tension. Inside the balloon is a feeling of relaxation and peacefulness that becomes bigger than any tension that may be there. Let all the tension flow out with the next exhalation. Inside, the feeling of relaxation becomes larger.

### Letting Go Is *Not* Stuffing Your Feelings

Letting go does *not* mean pushing away your feelings or "stuffing" your reactions to people or situations. As feelings or thoughts that are stressful come up, you can simply take a deep breath into them and let them go. As stressful thoughts and feelings arise, we still experience them, but don't let them take hold of us and linger longer than they need to.

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### Session 3 (continued)

By practicing Letting Go throughout the day and during your seated practice, you quickly learn to let go of tensions as they arise. You become freer of negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that may be strong habits. Letting Go opens up more choices for how you will react to things and what you will do. For example, John was a person who believed it was wrong for someone to change lanes in front of him when he was driving down the highway. Because of this deeply held belief, he became angry when someone changed lanes in front of him and felt justified if he flew into a rage and even made rude gestures at the other driver. Because John lived in a place where there was a lot of traffic, he was usually quite exhausted by the time he arrived at work in the morning. John decided to practice Hum Sah on his way to work to reduce the tension he felt on the road. When other drivers cut him off, he worked to let go of his anger and expand the relaxed and happy feeling he got from the Hum Sah practice. As a result, John could still become irritated by traffic, but now driving to work was more of a pleasure. John's tendency to get irritated by other drivers was not erased in a day or even a week, because it was a strong habit. However, John's regular practice of Hum Sah and Letting Go and his commitment to developing himself offered great benefits to John because he was able to focus on the happiness that was inside him, rather than spending his time on unproductive habits.

So, in this practice, letting go *is* a way of giving up, but you are only giving up the habit of holding on to anger, frustration, and fear. When we let go, we are looking for that place of relaxation on the inside. It is always there when you look for it.

By practicing Letting Go throughout the day and during your seated practice, you quickly learn to let go of tensions as they arise. You become freer of negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that may be strong habits. Letting Go opens up more choices for how you will react to things and what you will do.

### Letting Go and PTSD

People with PTSD are bothered by reminders of their traumatic events. These reminders or trauma triggers can cause intense distress. People quickly learn to avoid trauma triggers in hopes they can avoid the suffering that goes with being reminded of the trauma. Unfortunately, avoidance often prolongs our suffering, because we are not able to resolve the trauma and put it in the past.

#### ***Letting Go and Avoidance***

The Letting Go practice is an alternative to avoidance. When we are practicing Letting Go, we are simply paying attention to the present moment, noticing what is happening, and letting go of thoughts, feelings, and tensions as they arise, rather than trying to push them away or think about them more. This practice can be challenging for people with PTSD, because when distressing thoughts and feelings come up, the urge to avoid these thoughts and feelings may be strong. With Letting Go, when a trauma reminder makes us extremely upset, we then take a deep breath into the tension and feelings inside, as we exhale, we actively release the distress.

*(continued)*

### Session 3 (continued)

With Letting Go, we know that as painful as some of our experiences may be, they will pass. As we practice Letting Go, we will get better and better at staying in the “here and now,” rather than ruminating about what happened in the past.

#### ***Identifying Trauma Triggers***

The more attention we pay to the present moment, the more we may notice things that trigger our distress. This knowledge is powerful because when we know what triggers our distress, we can actively work to notice our reactions to the trigger and simply let go of them, rather than letting them take us by surprise. When trauma triggers have bothered us for a long time, they do not always go away completely the first or second time we let go of them. By practicing Letting Go over time, trauma triggers will no longer cause distress. Practicing Letting Go in your daily life is like going to the gym and working out every day. At the gym, your body becomes stronger each time, but it takes work to achieve that strength. Letting Go is also hard work, and every time we let go, we get stronger.

#### **FAQs for Session 3**

*Does Letting Go mean I can never get angry with anyone again? This would be a problem for me because some people will just take advantage of me if I'm too quiet.*

Letting Go doesn't mean you become a doormat. Letting Go is a bit like unhooking all the habits and tensions that are attached to you so that situations and people can't “yank your chain” or trigger you in that way anymore. If you face situations with a deep sense of letting go, you'll be able to use your anger skillfully in the situation, rather than having it use you. Here's how to use your practice to deal with anger: When we get angry, all of our attention wants to flow out of us toward the other person. Instead of exploding with anger, we can first take a breath right into the place where the anger is and then let go of it. If we can do this practice even for one instant, we may be able to respond much differently to the situation. There is a universe of possibilities in the space of one breath. If you give yourself a moment to take a breath and let go, you may find that you are able to react in new ways to situations.

*Does Letting Go mean that I should look for tension or focus on it in some way?*

No, the focus of meditation is not on tension, but on finding and expanding that sense of relaxation, peacefulness, and happiness that is inside you. It's a bit like steering a large boat. As boat pilots know, if you want to steer a boat through a channel, you do best to look ahead at the goal, rather than at the channel markers. If you focus on the channel markers, you may steer into them. If you focus ahead on the goal, you'll sail right past them. Those tensions that arise in meditation are like channel markers: Let go of them and sail right past them to the goal.

*(continued)*

### Session 3 (continued)

*What if I don't feel any tension when I am meditating? How do I let go?*

Although the Letting Go practice is helpful when one is experiencing strong emotions or thoughts, it can also be used if you are not feeling any particular tension. You can let go of distracting thoughts that arise while you are meditating. You can let go of your curiosity about how long you've been meditating, rather than checking the clock. You can let go of those feelings of hunger or that sensation of muscle pain in your back. You can let go of the feeling of happiness that arises and watch for what will come next. In sum, let go of anything and everything that come up in meditation.

*I'm not sure if I'm letting go or not. Is there something I can try to give me an experience of letting go?*

Try this practice to get started: Focus your breathing in your heart area, right in the center of your chest. Don't do anything to change your breathing at first, but just watch the breath as it flows into your heart area and flows out again. You can picture that your breath is going right to the heart and blowing up like a balloon that becomes bigger with each breath. Inside the balloon is a feeling of relaxation and peacefulness. Then, as you exhale, simply let go of any tension or holding. Inside, the feeling of relaxation becomes larger.

### Session 3 Practice

#### **Tasks for the Next Week**

This week, you can make a concerted effort to bring your practice into your daily life to cope with the issues that matter to you. You may wish to consider ahead of time what issues you want to try to address with your daily life practice. You can continue your efforts to set up a regular daily sitting practice that works for you, knowing that most people's practice develops over time, with more minutes devoted to it each week.

#### **Practice in Daily Life**

Watch your breathing throughout the day. Make a special effort to use the Letting Go practice with any tension that comes up. You can do this by taking a deep breath and, as you exhale, simply let go of any tension or holding. See how many times you can let go this week. Notice what happens when you let go. How do you feel? Does it change the choices you make?

Be sure to use the Letting Go practice when you really need it, such as when things aren't going well. These techniques can be helpful in dealing with strong negative emotions, for instance, anger, fear, frustration, and sadness.

*(continued)*



### Session 3 (continued)

#### ***Sitting Practice***

Listen to Track 2, “Complete Breath,” at least 6 days this week, for 30 minutes a day.

#### ***Daily Practice Log***

Write down the number of minutes you have spent each day on each practice. You will most likely not do all the listed practices every week. You can continue to record reflections about your use of the practices.

## ● Session 3 Journal ●

Have you tried Letting Go during your daily life? What was the situation, and what happened when you let go?

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What situations in your life might be improved by using this practice more frequently when you are in that situation?

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What was it like to watch your breathing during the day? Did it change your reactions to situations?

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**Debriefing the Practice:** Did you try the Letting Go practice during your Sitting Practice? How did it go?

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## Session 4. Hum Sah: The Power of Conscious Breathing

There is an old story about a meditation teacher who was giving a talk to some people about the power of repeating special words. The talk went on for some time. The teacher said that repeating special words helps quiet our minds so that we can experience peacefulness. He said that repeating these words helps to break old habits of repeating the same negative thoughts over and over again. Finally, a man in the back of the room stood up and yelled, “I don’t think you know what you’re talking about! How could just repeating a few words make such a big change for anyone?” The room fell silent. Everyone wanted to see how the teacher would respond. The teacher looked at him and asked, “Why don’t you sit down and shut up?”

The man was shocked. He turned red in the face. He trembled with rage. He tried to talk, but all he could do was stutter. Finally, he said, “How could you possibly talk to me like that? I thought you were supposed to be a meditation teacher and here you are abusing me!” The teacher looked at him kindly and calmly responded, “You see, I said only eight words to you and look what a big difference it made!”

This story explains the value of using special words. The words that we say to ourselves have a big effect on how we feel and what we do. So many people repeat negative things to themselves all day, like “I’m not good enough” or even “They are no good,” so it is no surprise if such thoughts start to make a person feel bad.

Repeating special words is a way of keeping our attention on the present moment by helping us follow our breathing, rather than getting caught up in our thoughts and feelings. Many traumatized people experience that their thoughts and feelings are out of control. Repeating special words like *Hum Sah* can help people to maintain their awareness of their breath and the present moment, in order to experience thoughts and feelings as they come up, without needing to avoid or focus on them. *Hum Sah* are words that represent the sound that our breath makes as we inhale and exhale. Repeating “Hum Sah” helps us pay more attention to the present moment because it helps us anchor our attention on breathing, even while having lots of other experiences. It doesn’t mean that the practitioner will never have a negative thought again. Negative thoughts are a part of life, but they don’t need to run our lives!

The Hum Sah practice is a way to use the power of conscious breathing in a more powerful way. Conscious breathing simply means being aware of your breathing. By repeating these special words, *Hum Sah*, with the breath, we can begin to let go of our negative thinking habits and enjoy feelings of relaxation and peacefulness.

Here’s how you do the Hum Sah practice. Watch your breathing. Notice each time you inhale and exhale. Silently repeat “Hum” every time you inhale and “Sah” every time you exhale. The practice audio track gives more instructions for the Hum Sah practice. As you repeat “Hum Sah,” you may notice that there is a slight pause in your breath after you inhale but before you exhale. Notice that still point as you repeat “Hum Sah.” You may also notice a slight pause after you exhale but before you inhale. Notice that still point as you repeat “Hum Sah.”

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## FAQs for Session 4

*What does Hum Sah mean?*

“Hum Sah” is meant to represent the sound of your inhalation and exhalation. If you listen carefully, you may notice that when you inhale, it sounds like “Hum,” and when you exhale, it sounds like “Sah.” The practice of noticing the sound of the breath and repeating words to represent that sound is a traditional practice, dating back hundreds of years in the classical yoga tradition. The words *Hum Sah* have meanings in many different languages, but none of those meanings are used in this program.

*What if I can't hear my breathing?*

It is not necessary to hear your breathing during Hum Sah. You can simply repeat the sounds in synchrony with the natural pace of your breath.

*Can I repeat “Hum Sah” at any time during the day, or should I only use it during Sitting Practice?*

Yes, you can repeat “Hum Sah” with your breath as much as you can during the day. If you have repeated “Hum Sah” a lot during Sitting Practice, it will be natural to do this practice at any time during your day, such as while you’re driving, doing chores, or standing in line at a store. You may find that it helps you relax and focus during the day. It may also help you get control of habitual patterns of thinking and feeling. If you are about to go into a stressful situation, practice Hum Sah for a short while and see what effect it has on your thoughts and emotions.

*My mind wanders while I'm doing the practice. Does this mean I'm doing it wrong?*

One of the first big milestones in your development as a meditator is to notice what your mind is doing. If you have noticed that your mind is wandering away, that is a great sign that things are going well. When your mind drifts off, gently bring it back to the practice. It doesn't matter how many times it wanders off, just as long as you bring it back. Each time you bring your attention back, your practice is getting stronger.

*Can I make up my own special words to use, or should I stick with Hum Sah?*

The words we repeat to ourselves can be powerful, so it's a good idea to be careful about what you say to yourself. The practice of Hum Sah is a simple way of listening to the breath or the repetition of the sounds that many people find relaxing.

*(continued)*

## Session 4 (continued)

*Sometimes I use other relaxation or meditation recordings. Is it OK to keep using those while I'm involved with this program?*

You will probably get the best results if you focus on one thing at a time. After all, you probably wouldn't try to learn to play the guitar from two teachers at once. Learning to meditate is just like learning other skills and requires some commitment and discipline.

### Session 4 Practice

#### ***Tasks for the Next Week***

If you have not yet settled on a regular time and place to practice, you can continue to try different strategies for developing a daily meditation practice.

#### ***Practice in Daily Life***

Watch your breathing throughout the day. Notice each time you inhale and exhale. You can repeat "Hum Sah" throughout the day with each breath. Silently repeat "Hum" every time you inhale and "Sah" every time you exhale. Notice how it feels to repeat "Hum Sah" throughout your day.

When Hum Sah is used as a form of practice in daily life, it is still a breath-focused practice and not just a process of mentally repeating the words. You may wish to do this practice while driving, waiting in line, or doing other activities. You can also notice what your experience of using the practice is. Does it help you notice your thoughts, feelings, and level of stress at each moment?

#### ***Sitting Practice***

Make sure you have a comfortable, quiet, and private place and time to practice this week. You can alternate Track 2, "Complete Breath," with Track 3, "Hum Sah," at least 6 days this week. You can listen to "Complete Breath" on one day and then "Hum Sah" on the next.

#### ***Daily Practice Log***

Write down the number of minutes you have spent each day on each practice. You probably will not do all the listed practices every week. You can review your logs this week to see how your practice has changed over the past few weeks.

## ● Session 4 Journal ●

Look over your journals for Sessions 1, 2, and 3. What times to meditate have worked best for you? Have you settled into a routine for practice?

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Are there still things you want to work on in terms of setting up a time and place to meditate? List the steps you will take to further develop your daily practice.

Step 1: \_\_\_\_\_

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Step 2: \_\_\_\_\_

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Step 3: \_\_\_\_\_

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What questions have come up for you about these practices?

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**Debriefing the Practice:** How did the Hum Sah practice go this week? Did repeating “Hum Sah” during meditation make it easier to meditate? Were you able to repeat “Hum Sah” during the day? If so, did you notice any change in yourself or the way things worked out for you this week?

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## Session 5. Centering in the Heart

As you watch your breath, where does it seem to go? Does it stop in the throat or in the chest? Does it feel like your breath goes all the way to your belly? Does your heart expand freely with each breath, or does it feel like a struggle?

Throughout the ages, people have thought of the heart as the seat of love. Many people find it relaxing to pay attention to the heart area as they breathe. By paying special attention to the heart area, right in the center of the chest, you may experience feelings of happiness, gratitude, peacefulness, and love for others. As you focus your attention on your breathing in your heart, you can look for these feelings. The process of Heart Meditation is not to change the way you are feeling, but rather to experience the full range of feelings.

Because the legacy of trauma is so painful, traumatized people can have difficulty being aware of and accepting the full range of emotions, both positive and negative. Traumatized people may not experience much positive emotion and feel as though they are cut off from feeling enjoyment and love toward others. In addition, traumatized people may not feel confident about dealing with strong negative emotions. For many people, negative emotions can be more obvious than positive emotions. Although negative emotions tend to be the most obvious, the majority of people find they experience both positive and negative emotions.

The purpose of Heart Meditation is to provide a way to explore and experience positive emotions, even positive emotions about yourself. These positive emotions can include happiness, love toward others, feelings of gratitude. Most important is the feeling of acceptance of your own inner experience, knowing that the process of trauma recovery is one of growth and development. We cannot change the past, but we can grow beyond it, no longer letting it define us.

The experience of having positive emotions can be stimulating, but it is not necessary to act on the positive feelings that arise. The Letting Go practice is used as a way to self-regulate in the face of these new experiences, to encourage letting go of both positive and negative feelings as they arise, rather than regarding them as a call to action. There is a difference between accepting and making amends with our own inner experience and with others in the outside world. Heart Meditation is an opportunity to have a broader range of experience, rather than to indicate issues that need to be resolved with others.

Here's how to center in the heart. First, watch your breathing. Notice each time you inhale and exhale. Pay special attention to your heart area, right in the center of your chest. As you inhale, expand in the heart area as much as you can. Don't worry if you are not able to take deep breaths. It is not necessary to take deep breaths in order to focus on your heart.

As you exhale, relax in the heart area. Take time to notice any feelings of peacefulness and love that surface. Let your breathing be natural. You don't need to breathe quickly. Each time you inhale, feel an expansion. Each time you exhale, feel the peace and relaxation. As the stresses of everyday life swirl around us, it is nice to take a moment to be centered in the heart.

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## Session 5 (continued)

### FAQs for Session 5

*I don't seem to feel much in my heart when I meditate.*

Don't worry too much about what you "should" be feeling. Meditation is about becoming quiet and noticing what is present. You can focus on the physical sensation of your chest rising and falling. You can make the breath expansive as you fill your heart deeply with breath and hold it a moment before you exhale. Whatever experiences will come, will come with practice.

*I noticed that when I do the Heart Meditation, I start breathing too hard and even start to get a little agitated.*

If you begin to get agitated during meditation, bring your attention to the breath to your navel area, right below your belly button. Expand the breath in the belly on the inhalation. Exhale completely. Watch the belly rise and fall with each breath. You can hold the breath for a brief moment on the inhalation and feel the sense of expansion. Belly breathing is usually calming and soothing in this kind of situation.

*Does that mean that belly breathing would be helpful when I'm anxious?*

Yes, do try lowering your breathing to your navel area whenever you feel nervous or lightheaded. It's usually grounding and calming for people.

*As soon as I try to meditate, my mind seems to get busier than ever. Instead of my mind quieting, it only seems to grow more active. What can I do?*

Many people find that as soon as they try to relax and quiet the mind, they become aware of just how busy their mind really is. In fact, your mind may try to fill in the quiet with even more thoughts than usual. Many people don't like to quiet their minds because they are trying to keep from just being with themselves. Life can be full of constant stimulation, such as TV, music, talking, and constant mental chatter, and it can seem lonely when these things fall away. This discomfort quickly passes with continued practice. As things come up, just keep letting them go and you will find that your experience quickly changes.

*Sometimes when I meditate, I am disturbed by old memories or feelings that come up. What should I do?*

As soon as your mind starts to get quiet, you may find many old memories, thoughts, and feelings surfacing. This is a normal part of the process. Sometimes people even cry or laugh without knowing why. These are common experiences that change quickly with continued practice. You can notice these things as they come up, but if you return your attention to the practice, they will quickly fade.

*(continued)*

## Session 5 (continued)

### Session 5 Practice

#### ***Tasks for the Next Week***

You can consider how your routine of regular sitting practice is going and whether you want to make any adjustments. You can reflect on how your practice has developed over the past weeks and consider whether modifications to the place or time of sitting practice will be helpful. You can make a plan for using your practice in daily life by listing times or situations in which you would like to try the practice and planning ahead for what practice you want to use.

#### ***Practice in Daily Life***

Watch your breathing throughout the day. Notice each time you inhale and exhale. Pay special attention to your heart area, right in the center of your chest. Take time to notice any feelings of peacefulness and relaxation that come up. You can repeat “Hum Sah” throughout the day with each breath. Silently repeat “Hum” every time you inhale and “Sah” every time you exhale. Notice how it feels to repeat “Hum Sah” throughout your day.

This week’s practice in daily life can focus on bringing more peace and equanimity into daily life by using Heart Meditation. The practice of watching the breath throughout the day can be used, with special attention to the heart area, right in the center of the chest. Take time to notice any feelings of peacefulness and relaxation that come up. Heart attention can be used along with Hum Sah repetition to support awareness of breath and experience.

#### ***Sitting Practice***

Listen to Track 3, “Hum Sah,” at least 6 days this week.

#### ***Daily Practice Log***

Write down the number of minutes you have spent each day on each practice. You will probably not do all the listed practices every week, though there should be a pattern of sitting practice each week in addition to practice in daily life.

● Session 5 Journal ●

How has your practice developed since you started 4 weeks ago?

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Has your meditation practice changed your day-to-day life in any way? Are you coping with stress, anger, or old memories any differently now?

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What would you still like to see happen with your meditation practice?

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**Debriefing the Practice:** How did the practice go this week? What was it like to focus in the heart? Which positive and negative emotions were you aware of?

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## Session 6. How to Release Tension

Every day, we have so many experiences, with all the feelings and thoughts that go along with them. These experiences tend to build up inside. People often carry a lot of accumulated tensions, anxieties, or fears. The Tension Release is an exercise designed to help let go of all those built-up tensions and feelings. It's a bit like filling up a board with lots of notes. It would be great to have a way to "erase the board" at the end of the day.

Here's how to do the Tension Release. Sit in a comfortable position. First, take a moment to notice your breathing. You can hold your hands out to your sides, with your palms facing the floor. As you inhale, you can swallow in the throat. Inhale directly into your heart area and expand with the breath. Hold your breath a moment and silently say, "I consciously wish to release all negative tensions." As you exhale, imagine all the tensions draining down your arms and out through the palms of your hands. On your next inhalation, just feel that the breath is breaking up any tension that might be in your heart area. You can repeat, "I consciously wish to release all negative tensions." As you exhale, visualize the heart pumping all the negative tension out of your arms and through the palms of your hands.

The wish to release tension is the most important part of the exercise. Really make an effort to break up all the inner tension and release it with the breath, until you can feel some relief from inner tension and holding. Take a moment to enjoy the feeling of quietness inside. Then you can move your head from side to side, raise your shoulders, and shake out your hands.

If you wish, you can hold up your arms overhead in a "V" shape, with the palms facing each other. As you inhale, swallow in the throat. Inhale directly into your heart area and expand with the breath. Hold your breath a moment and silently say, "I consciously wish to release all negative tensions." As you exhale, slowly lower your arms to your sides. Imagine all the tensions draining down your arms and out through the palms of your hands.

There are many times of day when it might be useful to do this exercise, such as in the morning when you wake up or right before bedtime. Some people like to do Tension Release for 10 minutes before their sitting practice, so that their mind is clear and quiet for the practice time. It is also helpful to practice Tension Release right after a period of sitting practice, to let go of anything that happened or didn't happen during the meditation practice. You can also do Tension Release at any time during the day when you need a quick break from the tensions of everyday life. Some people like to practice Tension Release before a stressful moment, such as a job interview, or when they have become angry or agitated about a situation. Tension Release is a powerful way to flush old tension from our systems.

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## Session 6 (continued)

### FAQs for Session 6

*Is it useful to do Tension Release even if I'm not feeling tense?*

Yes. We can hold tensions without even being aware of it. It is useful to let go of any thoughts, feelings, or tensions that have accumulated during the day. Keep trying the practice and see if you begin to feel better by doing so.

*How can I use Tension Release in my everyday life?*

It can be useful to do Tension Release at different times during your day. If you are sitting in a meeting, waiting in a line at the drugstore, or even waiting for a child's temper tantrum to pass, Tension Release is a valuable method for staying calm and releasing stress before it accumulates.

*I've noticed that my neck muscles become more relaxed when I do Tension Release. Is that typical?*

As you work to release tensions, physical tensions can be released also.

*I have problems sleeping. Can I use Tension Release or the practice audio track to help me sleep?*

“Yes,” many people find that the practice audio track and other practices can help them sleep better. Just be sure that you do practice at some time during the day when you are NOT sleeping; otherwise, you will always associate practicing with sleeping.

*Help! I started the IR Participant Guide, then got busy and set it aside for a bit. What should I do?*

Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and start all over again! Growth doesn't always occur in a straight line and progress as we think it will.

### Session 6 Practice

#### **Tasks for the Next Week**

You may wish to consider how you will support your ongoing practice after the group is over. This week, you can begin to explore other supports for practice, including other classes, mobile applications, or maintaining your practice on your own. You may wish to be prepared to discuss it next week.

*(continued)*



## Session 6 (continued)

### ***Practice in Daily Life***

Use the Tension Release exercise anytime you need it throughout the day. You can also practice it at night before going to sleep. In daily life, outside of a regular sitting practice period, it is possible to do a quick version of Tension Release by taking in a breath into the heart area and holding it for a moment, while silently repeating, “I wish to release all negative tension.” With the exhalation, visualize the negative tension draining out of the arms and out through the hands.

### ***Sitting Practice***

Use Track 4, “Tension Release,” at least 3 days this week.

On the other 3 days, begin practicing without using a practice track. You can use any of the techniques we’ve learned. Some people like to begin their period of practice with the Tension Release exercise, next practice the Complete Breath, and then spend some time doing Hum Sah, letting go of any tension that arises. Try different techniques and see what works for you.

### ***Daily Practice Log***

Write down the number of minutes you have spent each day on each practice. You may not do all the listed practices every week. It will be helpful to record the types of practices you did in your self-guided practice, when you did not use an audio recording. You should progress at your own pace in transitioning from audio-guided practice. It is typical to have shorter practices during the early weeks of self-guided practice.

● Session 6 Journal ●

What situations in your life could be improved if you used your practice more often when in that situation?

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Which practices did you use when you practiced without a practice audio track?

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What was it like to practice without the practice audio tracks? Was it easy or hard?

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**Debriefing the Practice:** How did the Tension Release go? When did you practice it? What happened when you used it?

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## Session 7. Making the Practice a Part of Your Life

By now, you have tried many useful meditation techniques and probably spent many hours practicing them. Now is a good time to think about how to make these practices an ongoing part of your life.

Which of the practices work the best for you? You might find some are particularly helpful, and some don't seem to work as well. You should set up a regular time to practice, and you should use the practices that work the best for you. You don't need to do the exact same practices every day. You can try doing the practices that you feel you need on a given day. What's important is that you spend some time each day practicing on a regular basis.

Don't worry if you think that you are not doing the practices perfectly. It is difficult, or impossible, to judge our own progress in meditation. Some days it will seem easy to practice, and some days it will seem especially hard. This is a normal part of the process, so don't worry about it. If you believe you get some benefit from practicing, then it is worthwhile to keep doing it.

Many circumstances get in the way of a regular practice. People always think they don't have enough time. There is an old saying about not having enough time to practice: "If you have enough time to eat, sleep, and bathe, then you surely have enough time to practice." Many people find that practicing the first thing in the morning or the last thing before bedtime is a way to find the extra time.

After practicing for a while, people often notice a change in the way they relate to others. This change frequently improves their relationships. It would be helpful to now take a moment to consider what has changed in your life because of all the practice you have done. Are you calmer and more centered? Are your relationships going more smoothly, or are they at least less stressful? Thinking about what has improved and what you would still like to work on can inspire you to keep practicing.

If you have received some benefits from meditating these past weeks, you may be wondering how to advance your practice even further. Certainly, maintaining and growing your daily practice are essential. Many people find that joining a class or meditating with a group gives them the support, guidance, and inspiration they need to keep going and to continue to develop. This week, spend some time contemplating how you would like to foster your own growth and development. Would you like to take more classes? Would you like to do more reading about meditation and learn more? This session's journal will help you ponder how you would like to keep your momentum going after this program has ended.

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## Session 7 (continued)

### FAQs for Session 7

*How can I find out about meditation classes?*

There are many places where meditation instruction is offered. Recreation centers, health clubs, and yoga centers frequently offer meditation sessions. Sometimes churches also offer sessions for their members. You can check the Internet or mobile application stores for online classes, too.

*When I was meditating, I remembered something bad someone did to me a long time ago, and I'd like to reconcile with and forgive that person. Should I call them and try to work it out?*

If you did, it wouldn't have anything to do with Letting Go. Many times in meditation, old memories or feelings can come up. When they do, it is a chance for us to let go of them, to let go of the hold they have on us, to rise above that level of tension. If your goal is to rise above old tensions, you should just let these things go as they come up. Focusing on or analyzing these thoughts and feelings that surface is not helpful because the more you focus on such matters, the bigger the hold they can have on you. It's like the old saying about harboring a grudge: "That guy's been living in my head for so long, I should start charging him rent!" Letting Go is a process of evicting these old thoughts and impressions to make a bigger space inside to meditate in.

*This week, I don't think I meditated at all when I practiced without the practice audio track. I practiced for the whole 30 minutes but didn't seem to get anywhere.*

How wonderful that you kept going for 30 minutes even when the practice seemed difficult! Often the practice seems to become more difficult right when we are making the most progress. It is difficult, or impossible, to judge our own progress in meditation. Don't worry if you think you are not doing the practices perfectly. Some days, it will seem easy to practice; some days, it will seem hard. This is a normal part of the process, so don't worry about it. If you believe you get some benefit from practicing, then it is worthwhile to keep doing so.

### Session 7 Practice

#### **Tasks for the Next Week**

You may consider plans for how to continue your practice, such as practicing on your own, with a group, with significant others, through online supports, or via mobile applications. This week, you can try some of these plans and see how they work. You can also prepare to discuss your experiences in the group next week.

*(continued)*

### ***Practice in Daily Life***

This week, there is an emphasis on using practices as much as possible in daily life. You can use all the techniques you have learned: watching the breath, Letting Go, repeating “Hum Sah,” and the Tension Release exercise.

Remember to watch your breathing throughout the day. Notice each time you inhale and exhale. Make a special effort to let go of any tension that comes up. You can do this by taking a deep breath and, as you exhale, simply let go of any tension or holding. You can repeat “Hum Sah” throughout the day with each breath. Silently repeat “Hum” every time you inhale and “Sah” every time you exhale.

Use the Tension Release exercise anytime you need it throughout the day. You can also practice it at night as you are going to sleep. Simply take in a breath into your heart area and hold it for a moment. Silently repeat to yourself, “I wish to release all negative tension.” As you exhale, feel the negative tension draining out of your two arms and out through your hands.

Use any of these techniques throughout the day. Be sure to use them when you really need them, for instance, when things aren’t going well. These techniques can be helpful in dealing with strong negative emotions such as anger, fear, and frustration.

### ***Sitting Practice***

Practice without using a practice audio track. You can use any of the techniques we’ve learned. Some people like to begin their period of practice with the Tension Release exercise, next practice the Complete Breath, and then spend some time repeating “Hum Sah,” letting go of any tension that arises. Try different techniques and see what works for you.

### ***Daily Practice Log***

Write down the number of minutes you have spent each day on each practice. You may do all the listed practices every week. It will be helpful to record the types of practices you did in your self-guided practice.

## ● Session 7 Journal ●

What are your thoughts about continuing to meditate after this program is over? Will you want to continue?

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What do you need to make it possible to continue to meditate? Do you like to practice all on your own? Would you find the company of others and the guidance of a teacher a valuable experience?

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What steps will you take this week to cultivate your practice and expand on the growth you have already experienced?

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**Debriefing the Practice:** How did the practice go this week? What was it like to practice without a practice audio track? What would you like to remember about how your meditation is going now?

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## Session 8. Keeping the Practice Going

Session 8 is the last of the weekly sessions, with 4 weeks until the Booster Session (Session 9). This is a time when you may reflect on the progress you have made and also consider ways in which you still wish to grow. This time of reflection can bring some feeling of accomplishment, as you may have made many changes and tried out many new ways of thinking, feeling, and being in the world over the past weeks.

With these gains can also come a sense of loss, because leaving behind old patterns is a change and may bring new challenges. There may be some sense of sadness that the road ahead means actively working to maintain the gains you've made, rather than leaving the sessions "cured," with no need to take additional active steps in the service of your ongoing growth and trauma recovery. It is helpful to explore these experiences of reluctance to change, or even sadness at the loss of a previous way of living.

The 4 weeks between the end of Session 8 and the Booster Session (Session 9) are a time to try out the practices on your own, without the support of the weekly group. It is a time to explore which practices are a good match and can be sustained over time. It is a time to note the areas of progress and reflect on how far you have come and what work you may still wish to do.

As we draw this weekly program to a close, you may spend some time planning for continuing your practice over the next 4 weeks. If you feel the practice has been helpful, it is important to plan for how to keep your practice going.

Many people find it easier to practice with a group. Classes may be available both in-person and online. If you are interested in attending an in-person group, you can explore classes in your area. You should look for classes that are near your home or work, because it can be difficult to attend a class that is far away on a regular basis. Go to the class a few times on a trial basis. Do you like the instructor? Is it in a safe and pleasant location? Is the cost of the class affordable? You may need to go to a few different classes before you find one that is a good match for you.

If you choose not to attend a class, plan for ways to keep your practice going on your own. Having established a daily routine that includes a regular time and place to practice is most helpful in this regard. If you think that practicing is an important part of your daily routine, then you will be a great success.

### FAQs for Session 8

*Is it better to meditate in a group or by myself?*

Most people who maintain a regular daily practice of meditation will be meditating on their own almost every day. In order to keep the practice alive, many people find it helpful to have the guidance of an experienced teacher and the support of the company of other meditators.

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## Session 8 (continued)

*Can I still use audio tracks for the various practices?*

You can turn back to the audio tracks any time you want to refresh your memory about the practices.

*Meditating seems harder than it did when I first started. Am I doing something wrong?*

No! It is a great sign of progress to notice that it is sometimes difficult to sit in meditation or to let go of things as they come up. Often the practice seems to get much more difficult just before we make a great breakthrough. So, don't give up. When it seems difficult, you can say "Oh well" to yourself—accept your experience with equanimity—and just keep meditating.

## Session 8 Practice

### **Tasks for the Next 4 Weeks**

You can continue to explore and problem-solve ways to maintain daily practice until the Booster Session (Session 9).

### **Practice in Daily Life**

You can use all the techniques we've learned: watching the breath, Letting Go, repeating "Hum Sah," and the Tension Release exercise. Use the Tension Release exercise anytime you need it throughout the day and during Sitting Practice.

Remember to watch your breathing throughout the day. Make a special effort to let go of any tension that comes up. You can do this by taking a deep breath and, as you exhale, simply let go of any tension or holding. You can repeat "Hum Sah" throughout the day with each breath. Be sure to use the techniques you have learned when you really need them, as when things aren't going well.

### **Sitting Practice**

As this program comes to a close, take a moment to be grateful for the opportunity to learn about meditation and for the commitment you have made to yourself. Let the feelings of gratitude, love, and happiness really build inside of you, then inhale and let go of them, and see what comes next.

You can follow the plan you set for yourself for daily sitting practice, with the recommended amount still being 30 minutes a day for at least 6 days a week.

### **Daily Practice Log**

Write down the number of minutes you have spent each day on each practice during the next 4 weeks.



## ● Session 8 Journal ●

Look back at your journal for Session 1. Has your practice helped you reach the goals you listed?

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Reflect on what it would be like to have only one goal for meditating: a goal of growing spiritually. Would that change your practice in any way?

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Where would you like to go in the future with your practice?

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**Debriefing the Practice:** As this program comes to a close, take a moment to reflect on what the experience was like for you. What were the best and worst parts of the last 8 weeks?

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## Session 9. Booster Session: Future Directions for Your Practice

With the end of this session, you are officially a graduate of the Inner Resources for Stress (IR) program. You have spent many hours practicing and working in the group and on your own. By now, you have developed some inner resources that will help you weather the stresses and storms of everyday life.

You are probably settled into a regular daily routine that includes activities, such as meditating, that benefit you. We hope these practices will refresh and renew you every day. Many people have noted that meditation, like trauma recovery, is more about the path than the destination. Both processes reflect a trajectory or pathway of change over time. As with any path, continued attention and commitment result in a continued development. The nature of a trajectory is that small changes each day can produce large changes over time. Meditating is a wonderful journey to be on . . . each day you can discover something new.

### FAQs for Session 9

*Can I continue to use the practice audio tracks?*

Yes. Although the program is designed to develop the skills for self-guided practice, some people prefer to use the practice audio tracks. They can be especially helpful if you would like a refresher or reminder of a practice, or any time you want to include more structure in your practice.

*Can I just do Practice in Daily Life? Will I get the same benefits?*

Often when people have made progress in their practice, they put it aside to turn their attention to other pursuits. They may rely on Practice in Daily Life to keep their practice going. It is important to practice in daily life because it is a chance to bring our mindfulness skills to the very situations where we need them most. However, Sitting Practice is important to maintain those skills. Research shows that Sitting Practice is more strongly related to benefits than Practice in Daily Life.

*Why do I still feel as though I have tensions? Shouldn't meditation eliminate them?*

A MM practice is like a good workout at the gym. The benefits are long-lasting but can be maintained the best through regular practice. In your reflections from Session 8, you may have noticed that you are stronger and more resilient. You may find that now you can easily deal with some issues that may have bothered you in the past. An old saying is that the reward for hard work is more hard work! As you master past challenges, you will be able to address more difficult ones.

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## **Session 9 Practice and Beyond**

### ***Tasks for after the Group***

You can continue to explore ways to keep your practice and your commitment to yourself fresh and vital. Caring for yourself is as important as your other responsibilities.

### ***Practice in Daily Life***

You can use all the techniques we've learned: Breath Awareness, Body–Breath Awareness, repeating “Hum Sah,” Letting Go, and the Tension Release exercise. Pay attention to the effects of each of these practices on your thinking, feeling, and actions. Use what works for you to promote your growth.

### ***Sitting Practice***

You can follow your plan for daily sitting practice, with the recommended amount still being 30 minutes a day for at least 6 days a week. Much of this practice may be meditation without a practice audio track, though some people continue to make use of the practice audio tracks as needed. You can use any of the techniques we've learned. Some people like to begin their period of practice with the Tension Release exercise, next practice the Complete Breath, and then spend some time repeating “Hum Sah.” Try different techniques and see what works for you.

### ***Daily Practice Log***

You can continue to record the amount of daily practice you do. Recording practice time is a way to track your progress over time and note the relationship of your practice to your well-being.

## ● Inner Resources for Stress Daily Practice Log ●

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Session: \_\_\_\_\_ Starting date: \_\_\_\_\_

Record the number of minutes each day of each activity.

Number of minutes using each technique →	Track 1: Guided Body Tour (with audio)	Track 2: Complete Breath (with audio)	Track 3: Hum Sah (with audio)	Track 4: Tension Release (with audio)	Bonus Tracks (with audio)	Sitting Meditation/ Breathing Practice (without audio)	Practice in Daily Life (Breath Awareness, Hum Sah, Letting Go)	Daily Total (minutes per day)
Monday								
Tuesday								
Wednesday								
Thursday								
Friday								
Saturday								
Sunday								

**Comments:** Write down some reflections about how your practice went this week.

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## ● Resource Page 1. Using Mindfulness and Meditation for Trauma ●

Why practice mindfulness and meditation (MM) for trauma? Many people who have experienced severe stress have symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, called PTSD. To understand why PTSD continues over time for some people, it is helpful to review what the symptoms are and how certain ways of using attention and thinking that result from the trauma may actually keep people from recovering on their own. This information will help you understand why practicing MM may help resolve trauma reactions.

*When people have trauma-related disorders, they may:*

- Have upsetting memories or dreams about their traumatic experiences
- Become upset when they encounter reminders of the trauma
- Be vulnerable to trauma triggers, which are reminders of things that happened right before or during a trauma
- Dissociate, or have difficulties maintaining attention on the present moment
- Try to avoid things or thoughts that will remind them of their traumas
- Have difficulty remembering important parts of the traumatic event
- May ruminate, or have many negative thoughts and feelings that are difficult to manage
- Have difficulty experiencing positive feelings
- Feel detached from other people and disinterested in doing things they used to enjoy
- Have problems with concentration, sleeping, anger, or reckless behavior
- Avoid new situations and challenges because of fear and lack of confidence

*Traumatized people can use MM techniques to:*

- Maintain present-moment attention, even when stressed
- Become more mindfully aware of themselves, including feelings, thoughts, and how they feel physically, without negatively judging themselves
- Understand the connection between their distress and the traumas they have experienced
- Use mindfulness practices in daily life to help regulate responses to stress
- Let go of stressful memories and feelings as they come up, so they are not overwhelming
- Regulate their thoughts, feelings, and behavior even when triggered
- Learn to develop a state of *relaxed alertness* rather than being *hyperalert*
- Learn to be around reminders of their traumatic events without needing to avoid them
- Reestablish their sense of safety and confidence in dealing with new challenges
- Improve sleep and let go of anger as it comes up rather than acting on it
- Improve their relationships with others

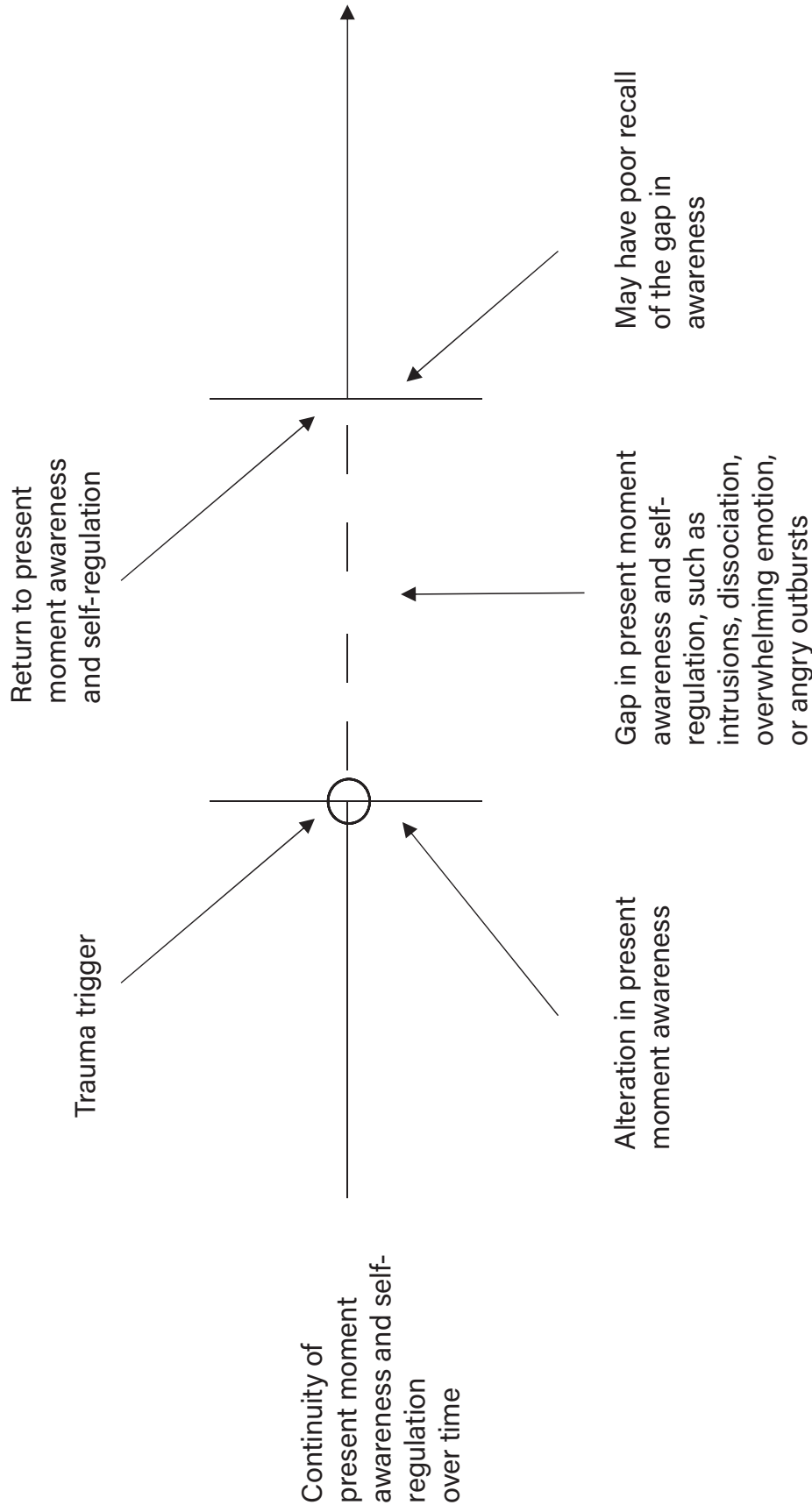
*People who meditate do not forget past traumas, but they can:*

- Honor their memories without being as upset by them
- Be around reminders of the event and maintain their feeling of relaxed alertness
- Stop needing to avoid thoughts, feelings, people, and places that remind them of their past experiences
- Accept that trauma has occurred in the past and may always have some impact

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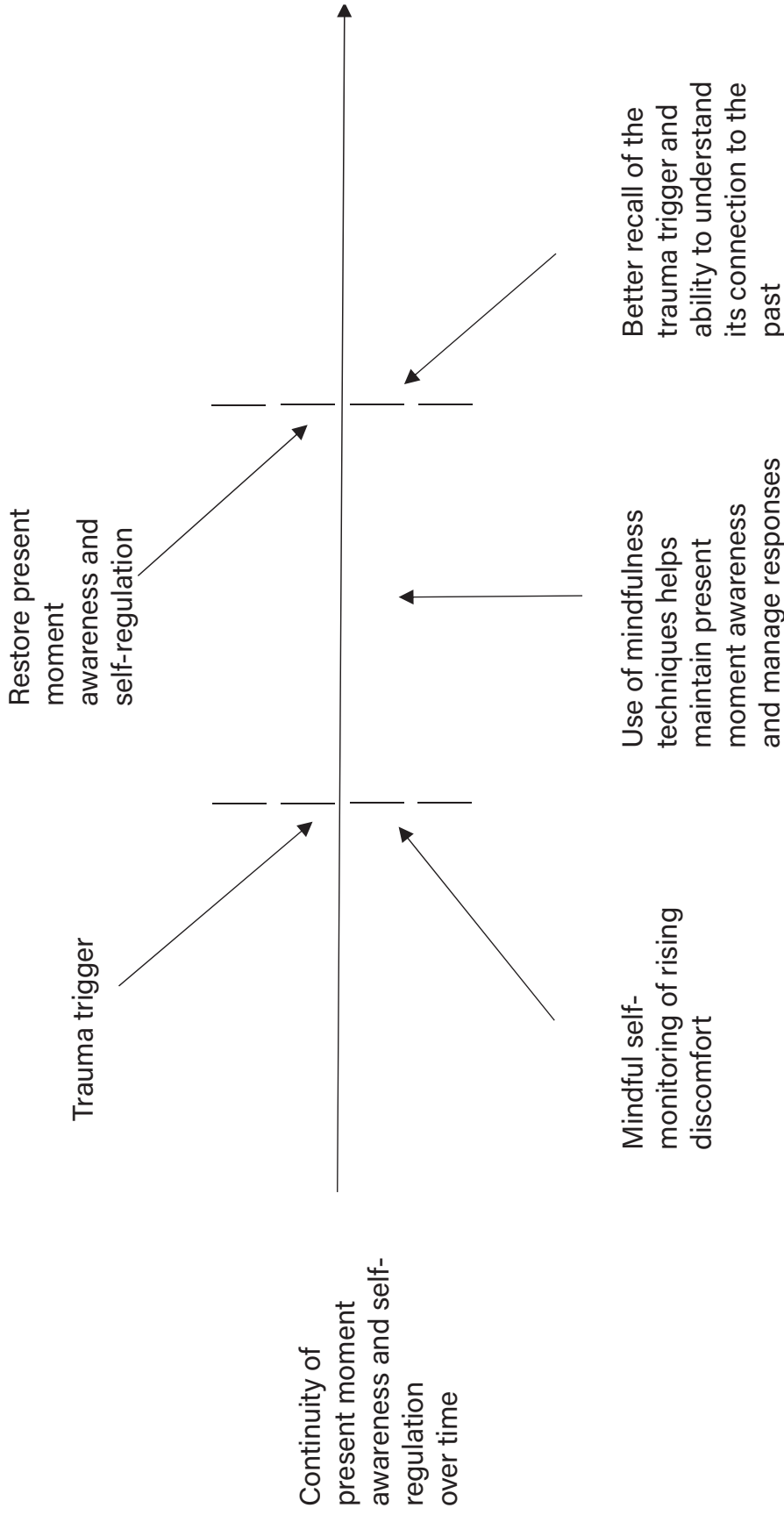
● Resource Page 2. Trauma-Related Disruptions of Present-Moment Experience ●



Note. Figure adapted from Allen, J. G. (1993). Dissociative processes: Theoretical underpinnings of a working model for clinician and patient. *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, 57(3), 287–308.

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● Resource Page 3. Using Mindfulness for Present-Moment Awareness and Self-Regulation ●



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## ● Resource Page 4. Overview of Inner Resources for Stress Sessions ●

### **Session 1 Welcome to Inner Resources**

- Treatment overview and rationale for using MM
- Psychoeducation about trauma and how MM can help
- Guidance about how to establish an MM practice
- Learn and practice two techniques for mindful body and breath awareness.

### **Session 2 Finding a Seat**

- Establishing a daily practice by finding a time and place to do between-session practice on a regular basis
- Discussion of experiences with between-session practice and applying meditation techniques to stressful moments
- Learn and practice two techniques for mindful breath awareness, using body-focused imagery

### **Session 3 The Power of Letting Go**

- Psychoeducation about ways to deal with obstacles to regular daily practice
- How to apply meditation techniques to daily life problems
- Learn and practice a body-focused imagery technique
- Learn the Letting Go practice to release stress as it arises

### **Session 4 Hum Sah: The Power of Conscious Breathing**

- Psychoeducation about the power of the words we repeat to ourselves
- Learn to use the silent repetition of words that represent the sound of the breath
- Learn and practice breath-focused repetition of the breath sound and the Letting Go practice

### **Session 5 Centering in the Heart**

- Psychoeducation about the value of paying mindful attention to positive emotions
- Learn and practice a technique for noticing experiences of positive emotions as they come up

### **Session 6 How to Release Tension**

- Psychoeducation about the cumulative effects of tension
- Learn and practice Tension Release, which is a way to use breath, visualization, gentle movement, and intention to let go of difficult emotions and accumulated stress
- Address ways to maintain the meditation practice after the group has ended
- Introduction to self-guided meditation

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● **Resource Page 4. Overview of Inner Resources for Stress Sessions** *(page 2 of 2)* ●

**Session 7 Making the Practice a Part of Your Life**

- Discussion of the key skills learned and treatment gains over the past 6 weeks and areas for continued development
- Discuss ways to continue to use meditation after the group has ended
- Practice guided and unguided meditation in group

**Session 8 Keeping the Practice Going**

- Acknowledge accomplishments of the past weeks
- Discuss plans for continuing to use the practice after the group has ended
- Practice guided and self-guided meditation in group
- Say thanks and goodbye until the Booster Session

**Session 9 Booster Session: Future Directions for Your Practice**

- Discuss ongoing use of daily meditation and experiences with using practice in daily life
- Compare experiences of weekly group practice with solo practice
- Group practice of unguided meditation
- Express gratitude and say goodbye